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WORK-LIFE CRAFTING:
Exploring How Millennials Crafted Work and Life Domains During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Master's Thesis
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Abstract of master's thesis

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Abstract

My thesis research uses a qualitative approach to explore how millennial workers coped with increased isolation and connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through semi-structured interviews of 40 millennial workers based in Canada and the United States, I collected and analyzed rich data on experiences working remotely during the pandemic. Findings indicated that in a period of massive change and sparked by specific motivations, interviewees began to craft their work and life surroundings using crafting practices and strategies. A theoretical framework extending original job crafting theory by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) is proposed as well as managerial implications, limitations and future research.

Keywords job design, job crafting, organizational design, COVID-19

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Purpose

The Covid-19 pandemic forced societies and businesses around the world to move daily operations online. This radical shift to the digital world happened in what felt like the blink of an eye, with large leaps in digitization being made and many companies responding to the shift to remote work at a pace much faster than was expected (LaBerge *et al.*, 2020). However, with enforced remote work becoming the norm and many social interactions becoming limited, strategies to handle employee wellbeing became crucial for companies as their workers set up office at home.

Given that the rate of employee burnout was already increasing (*Employee burnout common in nearly a third of UK companies, say HR directors*, 2013) and that organizational interventions were largely ineffective (Song and Baicker, 2019), it is unsurprising that a worldwide crisis driving societies into lockdowns would prompt researchers to call for research and intervention on the pandemic's psychological effects on employees given the increase in isolation and blurred work-home domains (Carvalho Aguiar Melo and de Sousa Soares, 2020; Galea, Merchant and Lurie, 2020; Jackowska and Lauring, 2021).

In fact, the effects of Covid-19 on employee well-being are already becoming evident. A recent wide-scale study using a combination of evidence-based scales to assess burnout and well-being in 1500 respondents across 46 countries revealed that 89% believed their work life was getting worse, 85% reported a decline in well-being, 56% indicated an increase in job demands and 55% felt incapable of balancing work and life (Moss, 2021). An explanation for these findings might be that work-life integration, which is much more likely while working from home, might not be conducive to work-life balance (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015).

Although this paints a grim picture of the large-scale impact of Covid-19, other researchers found a more positive or transformative impact of enforced remote work. A study seeking to understand public sentiment towards remote work through web scraping of tweets and natural language processing (NLP) found that general attitudes towards remote work were positive (Zhang, Yu and Marin, 2021). Another study using interviews at different stages of the pandemic found that individuals not only learned to adapt to technological changes of remote work but also underwent a much deeper transformation resulting from radical change (Razmerita and Kärreman, 2021).

What might be the explanation for such conflicting findings on how employees experienced remote work in the COVID-19 era? The answer to this question, I propose, is not the way certain organizations designed their roles, but rather the way employees actively crafted their work and life surroundings while working from home.

The purpose and motivation of this study is therefore to answer the urgent call for further research on the effects of the pandemic on employee wellbeing and to explore why experiences with remote work during Covid-19 varied so greatly. I will do so by examining *how millennial workers have crafted their lives and work in an environment of increased isolation and connectivity throughout the pandemic*.

1.2. Research Gap

My thesis first implicates the area of organizational research known as work-life integration and segmentation (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Integration and segmentation are two contrasting strategies to managing the boundaries of work and home, which can be applied not only on an individual level but also on an organizational level to shape work culture. Integration entails the marrying of work and family domains such that they become highly integrated (Bailyn, Robert and Kochan, 2001). Segmentation entails the deliberate separation between work and home domains in the hopes that interference between roles is reduced

(Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000). While research on work-life integration and separation does provide useful strategies for organizations, scholars place considerable emphasis on the fit between an organization's work-life culture and the employee's values (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015), while perhaps overlooking an employee's ability to shape their work environment on an individual level. Also, Dumas and Sanchez-Burks (2015) propose in their review that research on work-life integration and segmentation should expand to incorporate other domains of organizational research.

Job crafting is the proactive behavior individuals can take to change the task, cognitive and relational boundaries of their work to fulfill their motivations (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Job crafting has many benefits for organizations and employees, ranging from work engagement to mindfulness and meaningfulness (Petrou *et al.*, 2012; Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski, 2013). For example, Bakker and Derks (2012) developed a scale for measuring behavior in job crafting; results showed that self-reported job crafting had a positive association with colleague-ratings of work engagement.

Beyond Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) Job Crafting model, many scholars have extended job crafting theory to build on motivations of job crafting (Bindl *et al.*, 2019), job crafting practices (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2012) and crafting outside of the workplace (Petrou and Bakker, 2016). However, while this research has explored several routes for job crafting, no research has integrated life and work crafting into one cohesive model.

My thesis aims to answer the call for incorporating other areas of organizational research into work-life integration and segmentation by exploring how millennial workers coped with increased isolation and connectivity through the lens of job crafting. I will then extend Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) Job Crafting model into a comprehensive work-life crafting framework, ultimately advancing literature in this area by merging job and life crafting theories.

1.3. Research Objective

Considering this is a qualitative research study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Brink *et al.*, 2006), my research objective and research questions remained broad in nature so as to identify the most interesting patterns and topics while collecting data. Therefore, my research objective was to:

Explore how millennial workers have coped with increased isolation and connectivity during the pandemic.

Within this research objective, there were two main research questions:

How has increased connectivity and isolation affected millennial workers' work-life balance during the pandemic?

Have millennial workers crafted their work and life surroundings for better wellbeing during the pandemic?

1.4. Limitations

This survey was restricted to millennial workers because millennials are projected to become the major contributor to the North American workforce (Fry, 2018), and therefore much of the future of work implicates millennials in particular. As well, the geographical boundaries of my thesis were restricted to Canada and the United States for two reasons. First, gaining access to interviewees was of utmost importance given the undetermined end date of the pandemic, and therefore my goal was to use a network of possible interviewees at my disposal through personal connections. Second, considering the North American and European work cultures vary in nature and norms (Close, 2017), I chose to focus on North

American work culture as I believe the implications for the future of work post-pandemic are greater.

2. Literature Review

I will begin my literature review by exploring theories and literature on work-life integration and segmentation, the different outcomes of segmentation and integration on workers, and the rapid acceleration towards integration as a management style. Then, I will define job crafting as a distinct concept different than job design and outline the original job crafting model presented by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). After explaining the components of Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job crafting model and once the relevant literature, concepts and theories around work-life integration and separation have been explored, I will summarize the research gaps in both areas of research to build the foundation for the theoretical framework of my thesis.

2.1. Work-Life Integration and Segmentation

Research around work-life integration and segmentation centers around managing the boundary between work and life domains. Employees make decisions daily on how they manage their at-work and at-home lives, whether they interact and if so, to what extent. On a broader scale, organizations make conscious decisions about how much employees incorporate their personal lives in their work, thus shaping employee mindset towards their work and employer (Allen et al., 2013). The advantages and disadvantages of integration versus segmentation have been researched by many scholars (Bulger, Matthews and Hoffman, 2007; Golden and Geisler, 2007; Leung, 2011; Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015) through the lens of various theories. Two theories commonly used by researchers to explore work-life integration and segmentation are boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000) and border theory (Clark, 2000).

Boundary theory, proposed by Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate (2000), builds on the basis that roles (work, home or third place domains) have their own set boundaries anchored in space and time. These boundaries can be affected by *flexibility*, meaning whether and how much a role's boundaries can be moved either spatially or temporally. Boundaries can also be affected by permeability, which is described as "the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviorally involved in another role" (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000, p. 474). In sum, the permeability and flexibility of role boundaries is said to affect the transitions from one role to another, where highly segmented roles are inflexible and impermeable and highly integrated roles are flexible and permeable (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000). A figure representing the spectrum of segmentation and integration can be seen below (fig. 1).

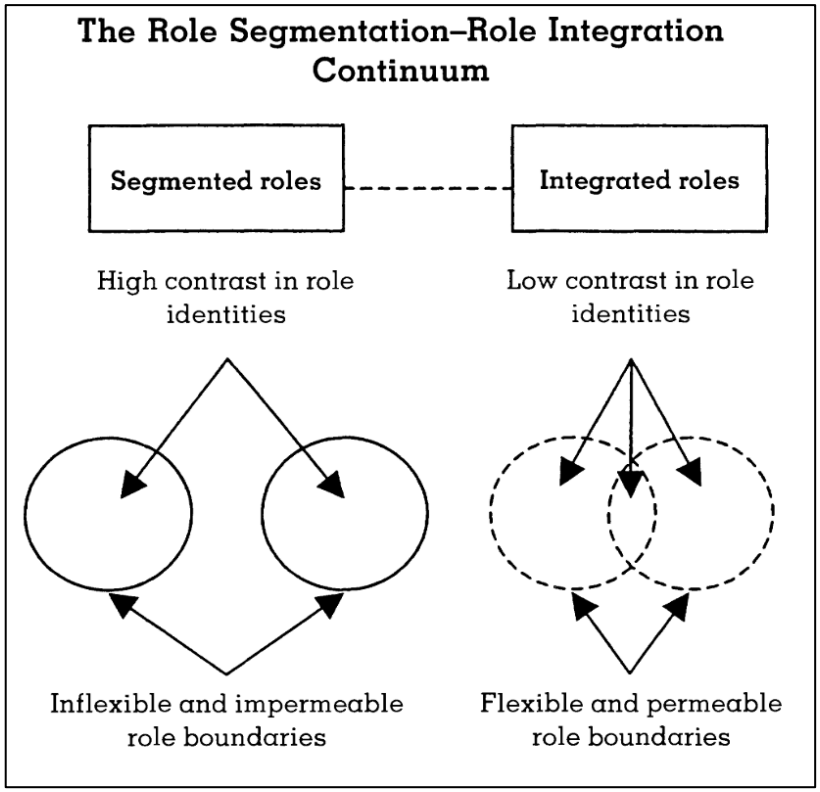


Figure 1: The Role Segmentation-Role Integration Continuum

Clark (2000) proposed a similar theory entitled work/family border theory as a way of explaining the balance and management of work/family spheres. Work/family border theory

begins with the idea that work and family are two unique domains that can interact with each other. Every individual transitions between these borders to some degree, and Clark (2000) coins the term 'border-crossers' for those who cross between spheres. To balance work and home domains well is to ensure little role conflict (Clark, 2000). This theory takes a more narrow focus than boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000), centering solely on family and work and not on other outside domains (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Nonetheless, the same terms of permeability and flexibility are used in border theory to describe the transition between roles (Clark, 2000).

2.1.1. Work-Life Segmentation

The traditional and largely accepted ideology in North American culture, stemming from industrialization and the resulting separation of work and home life (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015), is work segmentation. Segmentation as an approach consists of the deliberate separation between work and home domains. From the theoretical perspective of boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000), segmentation is suggested to reduce the amount of role conflict that takes place. Border theory (Clark, 2000) also suggests that when domains are highly segmented, interference between roles is reduced.

Studies examining boundary management and role conflict have supported segmentation as optimal for reducing role conflict (Kossek *et al.*, 2012). A longitudinal study assessing the impact of technology use on spillover in individuals and their families found that technology use, in particular cell phone use, was indeed blurring work/family boundaries, increased negative forms of spillover and was associated with increased distress and lowered family satisfaction. Another study investigating the effect of after-hours communication device use on work-related attitudes and work-home conflict found that use of communication technologies after hours was linked to work-life conflict (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007).

2.1.2. Work-Life Integration

While work segmentation certainly may seem like the preferred strategy for boundary management because of its ability to reduce negative spillover and role conflict, work integration presents its own benefits to organizations and individuals. Work integration is said to be a more realistic approach to managing personal and professional domains (Bailyn, Robert and Kochan, 2001). As opposed to avoiding the disclosure of personal information at work, employees who integrate are more likely to discuss personal matters and accept personal phone calls at work. In the context of boundary theory, Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate (2000) posit that employees might insert certain aspects of their identity that are important to them into other domains like work, allowing more diverse and varied opinions. Work integration can also better facilitate performing multiple roles in different physical locations (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Border theory (Clark, 2000), on the other hand, suggests that integration only takes place when work and home domains are similar and there is multilateral support from both professional and personal domain.

Work integration can have a positive impact on identity and relationship management, thereby benefitting organizations. A study exploring employment relationships and personal identities found that an initial focus on personal identity in newcomers led to increased customer satisfaction and employee retention compared to more traditional approaches of focusing on organizational identity or skills training (Cable, Gino and Staats, 2013). Another study focused on workplace relationships and boundary-setting among attorneys in the US and found that sharing personal information led to the development of better relationships with coworkers, ultimately facilitating better boundary control (Trefalt, 2013).

2.1.3. A Trend Towards Integration

When it comes to employee preference between integrating or segmenting work and life domains, empirical evidence points to integration being the ideal strategy as it allows more

flexibility (Hahn and Dormann, 2013), however a multitude of empirical studies continue to show that blurring or integrating boundaries increases problems in role responsibility management (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Bulger, Matthews and Hoffman, 2007; Allen *et al.*, 2013).

Despite evidence pointing to segmentation as the more optimal strategy for reducing role conflict, the digitization of many industries and the advent of new technologies indicate an unavoidable trend towards work integration (Kossek *et al.*, 2012). Much of this trend is due to the complex and collaborative nature of knowledge work (Gargiulo, Ertug and Galunic, 2009; Perlow and Kelly, 2014). Companies are also beginning to implement life-friendly work practices as the definition of the ideal worker shifts from a more traditional image to that of a multitasker and expert navigator between boundaries (Kring, 2020; Senarathne Tennakoon, 2020).

There is also considerable emphasis on the fit between a company's chosen strategy and the candidate's values when seeking new employees to ensure a better employee mindset towards an organization (Kreiner, 2006; Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). While this recommendation is important, Nam's (2014) study on technology's effects on work-life boundaries suggested that technology's influence on employees effects individuals in different ways, meaning there is likely not a one-size-fits-all approach to integration or segmentation. As the modern work environment continues to evolve to further integrate work and life, job crafting is an important tool for contemporary organizations to manage these different domains.

2.2. Job Crafting

2.2.1. What is Job Crafting and How Is It Different from Job Design?

Job crafting is defined by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) as "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (p. 179). This

definition means that employees themselves must act towards crafting their job and in the process, become job crafters. Job crafting is seen as a behaviour employees take part in on a daily basis and is done with the goal of achieving better person-job fit (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). A more recent conceptualization of job crafting by Grant & Parker (2009), which takes into account the constantly evolving nature of jobs and careers in the 21st century, describes crafting as a way to change their work in circumstances of increased ambiguity and dynamism.

Traditional job design approaches built on the idea that it is either the individual determinants (expectations or values) or the design of a job that influenced how an employee experienced their work. Job crafting is different from the concept of job design in that job design implies that the role itself is what motivates the employee to take on further tasks (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), whereas in job crafting, the responsibility to alter boundaries of one's job to create satisfying work falls on the employee (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). In this way, job crafting shifts job design's top-down approach to a bottom-up approach, thereby better catering to the individual needs of an employee and making them active participants in the design of their role (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2013; Bindl *et al.*, 2019).

Job crafting has also been put in to the context of the widely used Job Demands-Resources theory (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001), which can be applied to a variety of occupational settings by categorizing risk factors into job demands and job resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The initial study introducing JD-R theory demonstrated a position relationship between job demands (i.e. time pressure and shift work) and exhaustion and conversely, a negative relationship between job resources (i.e. feedback and participation) and work disengagement (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). Below is a figure of the Job Demands-Resources framework (fig. 2).

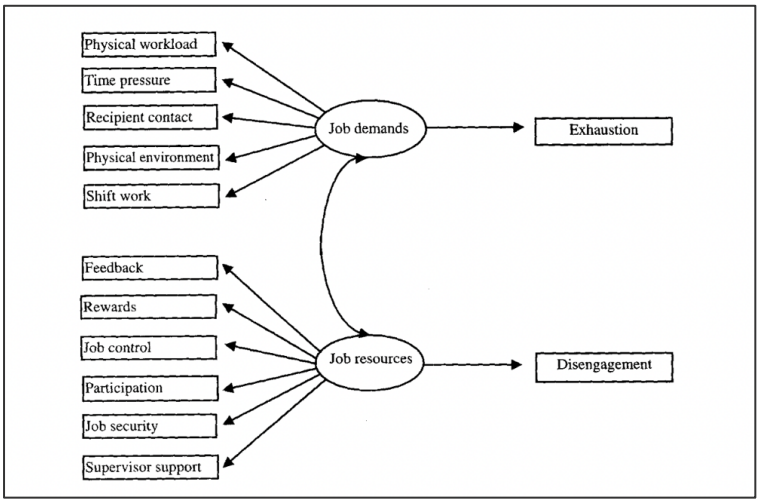


Figure 2: Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001)

These scholars argue that crafting involves changes to job demands and resources to achieve a balance between the two (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Petrou *et al.*, 2012). For instance, employees might craft their job to increase job resources such as feedback or participation to progress in their role, while others might reduce their job demands as a means of increasing wellbeing or reducing emotional exhaustion.

2.2.2. Motivations for Job Crafting

One of the seminal theories on job crafting proposed was in *Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work* (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). This article argued that previous research had minimized the role of employees in their own work tasks and interactions and proposed that instead, employees can become active participants in shaping their respective role as a creative and ongoing process used to adapt to their jobs and includes psychological, social, and physical changes. It is not said in this proposal whether or not crafting is beneficial to organizations, however many studies since have proven the benefit of crafting in an organizational perspective (Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk, 2009; Nielsen and Abildgaard, 2012; Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski, 2013; Morrow and Conger,

2018). The original job crafting framework by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) can be seen below (fig. 3).

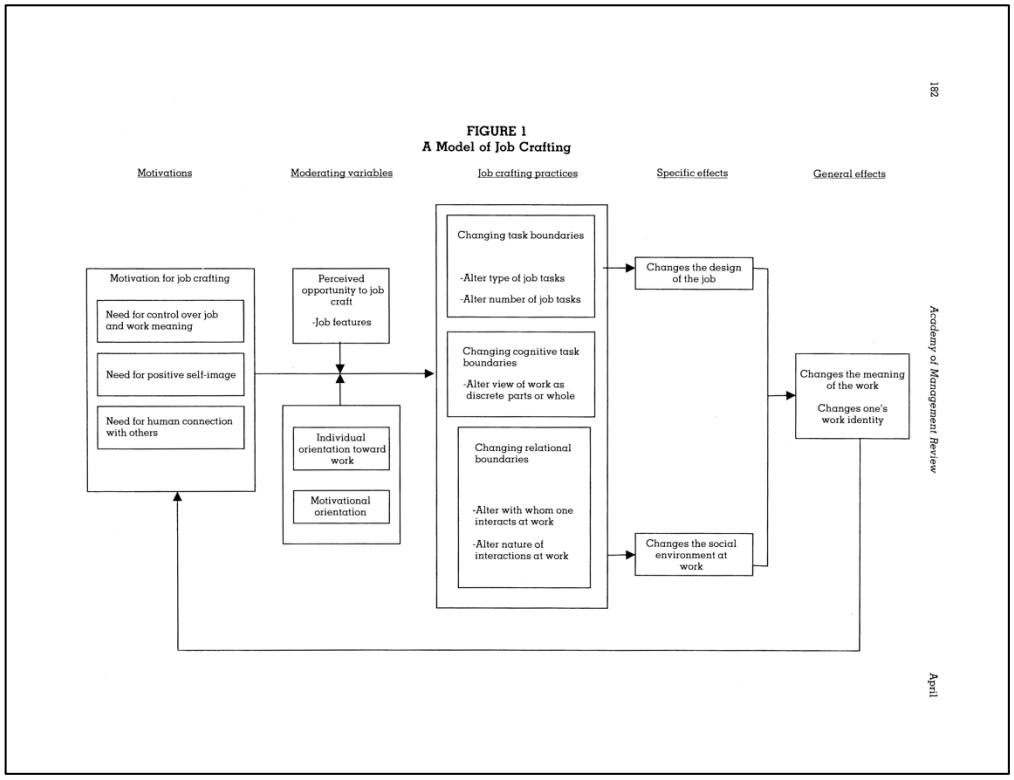


Figure 3: A Job Crafting Model (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001)

The job crafting model proposed begins with the premise that all crafting is engaged in through three main motivations. These motivations are (1) employees need to assert control over their work or jobs, (2) employees desire a positive self-image in their work and (3) that employees want to fill a foundational need for human connection with others (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

The need for control over job and work meaning stems from the basic human need for control (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Without control over one's work, there are drastic consequences on one's mental state such as anxiety, depression or burnout (Griffin *et al.*, 2002; Day, Crown and Ivany, 2017). When an employee actively takes more control in their

job or work, they are crafting the job to make it their own through certain tasks or skills. An example of crafting for more control might be taking on more challenging tasks to feel more autonomous and capable in a role.

The need for a positive sense of self not only in how an employee sees themselves but also in how others see them is rooted in social identity theory on the drive for self-enhancement (Rose and Tajfel, 1983). When barriers to a positive self-image appear, workers can craft their work environment to create a more positive sense of self in their job (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). An example of crafting for a positive self-image at work could be limiting interactions with fellow employees who have a negative attitude.

Employees can also craft for the purpose of human connection with others. This motivation is rooted in the human need to create and foster connections with the goal of finding more life meaning (Baumeister and Leary, 2018). This motivation extends beyond other theories on work meaning by including the impact of building relationships with other employees, suggesting that work meaning is not individually-based (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). A job crafter may, for example, actively seek out new connections within a company to feel a greater sense of belonging in their work community.

Whether these motivations spark proactive crafting behaviors depends on motivational orientation (which motivation they are driven by the most), work orientation (how they perceive their job or role) and the perceived opportunity to job craft (determined by job features). An example of how job features might affect the opportunity to job craft is a senior-level employee who sees challenges in crafting due to a fear of stepping on others' toes (Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2010). With regards to work orientation, feelings like cynicism towards one's job can lead employees to withdraw from their work as opposed to engage in crafting (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012).

In more recent years, researchers have sought to understand more about the motivations behind crafting. A recent study revisited the topic of job crafting and explored the questions of why and how employees initiate in job crafting changes (Bindl *et al.*, 2019). The theoretical model that was proposed is said to be the most comprehensive to date in job crafting research and suggests that employees take part in two forms of job crafting, promotion- and prevention-oriented crafting.

Promotion-oriented job crafting is said to be a "gains" approach in which individuals seek to extend the different boundaries of their job for professional development (Bindl *et al.*, 2019). An example of promotion-oriented relational crafting might be to actively network within one's organization to make a good impression on higher-rank employees. Another example of promotion-oriented crafting focused on tasks could be to take on a bigger workload to prove to senior-level employees your organizational commitment.

Prevention-oriented job crafting is focused on strategic decisions made by an employee to avoid negative outcomes from occurring (Bindl *et al.*, 2019). Bindl et al. (2019) note that prevention-oriented job crafting should not be seen as negatively impacting organizations and is not equal to an individual withdrawing from their work. Rather, it is a proactive behavior that focuses on maintaining a healthier balance and optimizing performance by focusing on what an employee does best. Examples of prevention-oriented crafting could be to limit interactions with unpleasant employees (relational) or reducing workload to ensure mental wellbeing at work (task).

2.2.3. Job Crafting Practices

These three central motivations serve as a catalyst for specific job crafting practices. The first job crafting practice is to change task boundaries. Specific strategies to change task boundaries are altering the type of tasks at work and altering the number of tasks at work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). An employee might, for example, reduce the number of

job tasks taken on as a means of reducing workload and gaining more control over the workday.

The second job crafting practice is to change the cognitive task boundaries of work. The strategy for this practice proposed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) is to alter the view of work as discrete parts of a whole. An ideal example of this practice taking shape is the hospital cleaner seeing their job as a higher purpose of contributing to a healthcare system that heals other people (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

The last job crafting practice is to change relational boundaries, which is done by either altering with whom one interacts at work or by altering the nature of interactions at work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). For example, if an employee finds interactions with a certain employee to be unpleasant, they might ensure that future interactions only focus on work-related matters or avoid interactions with that employee altogether.

Job crafting practices should not only be seen as a general behaviour, but also an individual and dynamic behaviour. Through a combined approach of a daily diary and general survey, Petrou et al. (2012) used a JD-R (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001) conceptualization of job crafting and demonstrated that when employees are not actively resisting change, they can adjust their environment to adapt to organizational change. Their findings also showed that crafting varied from one individual to the next and varied on a day level, supporting the idea that job crafting is a constantly evolving behavior. The findings from this study also served as a preliminary indication of how crafters deal with organizational change.

2.2.4. Benefits of Job Crafting

Job crafting is a behaviour that occurs across all occupations and industries (Nielsen and Abildgaard, 2012) and can occur from entry-level positions to senior-level roles (Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2010) and can carry many benefits to both employees *and*

organizations. These benefits include an increase in work engagement, job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and meaningfulness in work.

To begin, job crafting can promote an increase in work engagement (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012; Karatepe and Eslamlou, 2017). A study drawing from both qualitative (interviews with employees) and quantitative approaches to develop a role-resource approach-avoidance model for job crafting showed that both role and resource crafting led to increased work engagement and decreased strain (Bruning and Campion, 2018). Another study using a 5-day diary survey of 95 employees across various organizations examined the contextual determinants of daily job crafting and work engagement as a motivational outcome and found that day-level seeking challenges had a positive association to day-level work engagement, while day-level reducing demands negatively correlated to day-level work engagement (Petrou *et al.*, 2012).

Employees who craft their job may also see an increase job satisfaction. An exploratory qualitative study using observations, interviews and surveys to investigate job crafting and its various outcomes revealed that individual crafting enhanced employees' job satisfaction (Ghitulescu, 2006). A meta-analysis of the relationships between crafting behaviors and work outcomes showed support between the relationship of job crafting and job satisfaction (Rudolph *et al.*, 2017).

Crafting one's job can also benefit organizations in that it can increase organizational commitment (Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk, 2009). A study of 200 banking employees in Pakistan investigated the role of job crafting in organizational commitment with person-job fit as a moderating variable and found that job crafting had a strong positive association to organizational commitment. Another study researching the links between job crafting and certain job outcomes in the travel industry found that both individual *and* collaborative crafting have positive effects on organizational commitment, job performance and job satisfaction (Cheng *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, job crafting can have an impact on the meaningfulness of one's job (Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski, 2013). A longitudinal study collecting data from 114 employees over three weeks to explore the influence of job crafting on job-person fit and meaningfulness showed an indirect link between job crafting and meaningfulness at work moderated by person-job fit (Tims, Derks and Bakker, 2016). However, Morrow & Conger (2018) used survey data to explore this same relation and found no direct link between crafting and meaningfulness at work. Nonetheless, this lack of relationship was somewhat mitigated by mindfulness, meaning mindfulness practices could play an important role in achieving more meaning in work.

Finally, engaging in job crafting can improve overall performance at work (Bruning and Campion, 2018). Petrou, Demerouti & Schaufeli (2015) used longitudinal data from 580 police officers to address crafting behaviours in the context of organizational change and their effect on task performance and exhaustion. Their findings showed that seeking resources and challenges in a time of organizational change was associated with high task performance. Results from another longitudinal study exploring whether intentions to job craft led to crafting behaviors and, subsequently, higher work engagement and job performance suggested that employees can indeed increase job performance through job crafting.

2.3. Summary of Literature Review

Having fully explored the relevant theories and concepts that link to my thesis topic, I will now highlight the areas of future research in work-life segmentation and integration as well as the main research gaps in the current literature and theories on job crafting and establish the basis for my theoretical framework.

Literature on work-life integration and segmentation has covered the benefits and disadvantages of each approach. For example, work segmentation is shown to to reduce role conflict in boundary management (Bulger, Matthews and Hoffman, 2007) and work integration is shown to positively impact work relationships (Trefalt, 2013). Researchers suggest that organizations focus on the person-environment fit (Kreiner, 2006), however this strategy does not necessarily consider the dynamic nature of boundary management as a continuous process. As well, Dumas and Sanchez-Burks (2015) proposed that future research on work-life integration and segmentation incorporate other areas of organizational research that are relevant. Considering job crafting involves the deliberate modification of one's work environment for better person-job fit, it is well-suited as a topic that relates to boundary management and can allow for a more individual and dynamic approach to this research area.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job crafting framework, which outlined the motivations to job craft, moderating variables and three types of crafting practices, presented a theory which only covered one side of an employee's crafting environment: that of their work. While scholars such as Bindl et al. (2019) have since extended the framework to include promotion- and prevention-oriented job crafting forms, this still fails to cover the crafting that occurs outside of the workplace.

Other scholars have suggested that crafting can also be a meaningful activity at home (Petrou, Bakker and van den Heuvel, 2017; Demerouti *et al.*, 2020). The research on life crafting is still nascent, with only a few studies examining how crafting in other life domains takes place. Petrou & Bakker (Petrou and Bakker, 2016) proposed a theory on leisure crafting, however general leisure crafting was not found to be predicted by expansion-oriented job crafting (Petrou, Bakker and van den Heuvel, 2017), indicating the theory was perhaps lacking specific crafting practices. Home crafting was then suggested as a theory by Demerouti et al. (2020), yet this theory did not include domains outside of the home. Progress in life crafting has been made with this research, yet no study has integrated life and job

crafting into one theoretical framework, an ideal next step considering the shift towards work-life integration (Worley and Gutierrez, 2020).

My thesis will therefore fill three major research gaps in the organizational research areas of work-life integration and segmentation and job crafting. The first is that it will seek to connect the organizational research areas of work-life integration and segmentation and job crafting by proposing a work-life crafting model which considers the individual and dynamic behaviour of each employee, shifting from current strategies focused on organizations ensuring person-job fit. Second, I will extend Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) foundational Job Crafting model to include one's personal life, providing a more comprehensive model taking into account the whole person. Finally, an integrated framework will potentially remove the ambiguity around life crafting by not only providing specific life crafting strategies, but also connecting life and job crafting into one model.

As an additional note, though research by Petrou et al. (2012) has identified that employees can adapt to micro-level organizational change through crafting, it is said this would not be possible in the case of major change. This research can therefore contribute to current knowledge by observing how workers adapt to organizational change on a massive scale, which in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic is the sudden shift to remote work.

3. Methods

This study followed a qualitative approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Brink *et al.*, 2006) to develop theories abductively. Qualitative is the general research tradition of this field of study. I began with a broad objective of exploring how millennial workers adapted to a major shift to remote work during the Covid-19 pandemic, investigating their experiences with work-life balance and their connectivity behaviour. A focus on work-life integration/segmentation and job crafting only arose after other avenues were followed in analyzing the data.

Similarly, an interest in job crafting extending to other areas of life only came about from the data on participants' experiences adapting to increased isolation while working from home. Finally, my analysis led me to life-job crafting motivations and practices for millennial workers. As these patterns became clear, literature and well-known theoretical frameworks on job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Petrou *et al.*, 2012; Petrou, Bakker and van den Heuvel, 2017; Bindl *et al.*, 2019; Demerouti *et al.*, 2020) and work-life integration/segmentation (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015) were studied in tandem with my empirical analysis. This iterative process between interview data and existing theories is what sparked the motivation for this theory development.

3.1. Interviewees

I interviewed 40 workers working across a variety of occupations ranging from government policy analysts to creative directors. The main criteria selecting interviewees were that they (1) reside in Canada or the United States in or near a major city, (2) were millennials born between the years of 1981 and 1996 (Fry, 2018) and (3) were employed for either part of or the entirety of the pandemic from March 2020 onwards (including PhD candidates). The latter criterion was decided to include possible career or employment changes that may have taken place during this time. Interviewees were distributed across major Canadian and US cities, including but not limited to Ottawa, the Greater Toronto Area, San Francisco, New York City, and Montreal.

I found interviewees in or close to a major city because they were more likely to be affected by the movement and social contact restrictions put in place by their respective provincial or state government. Of the interviewees, 21 were female and 19 were male; 14 participants lived with their significant other, 17 lived alone, 6 lived with a roommate or family member and 3 were married with one or more children. The age of interviewees ranged from ages 25 to 38 (mean=28; median=27; mode=26). Most interviewees (32) were knowledge workers,

with occupations like analysts, lawyers, researchers, and creative directors, and the remaining interviewees had other occupations (e.g., artist, photographer, choreographer).

Interviewees worked on average 40 hours per week (9-to-5) unless they worked overtime or were able to select more flexible hours. In their free time, interviewees generally spent their days with personal hobbies such as hiking outdoors in nature, exercising, or seeking out social interaction if the opportunity arose. All interviewees were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity while discussing findings. A table of interviewees and their respective occupations, age and living situation can be seen in the appendix (7.1).

3.2. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were done in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant over a Zoom call. The questions were designed as open-ended to ensure the possibility for discussion to emerge from the various topic areas. The overall goal from each interview was to establish trust so that interviewee might share their experiences and emotions surrounding increased isolation and remote work during the pandemic. The questions asked in every interview included the interviewee's living situation, when they began working from home, how often they were connected to their work, what activities they took part in to recharge outside of work as well as what elements of self-discovery took place while in isolation.

When interesting information came to light, the interviewee would then be prompted to elaborate with examples of specific moments in time. Example questions include "How do you feel the pandemic has affected your work-life balance?" and "How often did you take part in self-discovery during the pandemic?" Questions were also asked about specific activities to recharge outside of work, with questions such as "What types of activities do you take part in after work or on the weekends to feel recovered?" and "How does it feel to take part in these activities for yourself?"

This interview style was very helpful in discussing emotional topics such as the burden of increased isolation and the lack of human interaction. Each interview lasted approximately 30-50 min and were recorded and fully transcribed. All interviewees used English as their native language, meaning no translation was required. The discussion guide used for the interviews can be seen in the appendix (7.2).

3.3. Coding and analysis

Using Atlas.ti software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany) for qualitative data analysis, each interview transcription was coded. The initial exploratory coding stage consisted of identifying terms, codes and categories emerging from interviews (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013), which were then narrowed down based on similarities or duplicates. The resulting 33 descriptive codes ranged from "Not wanting to return to 9-5 office work" to "Seeking human interaction + connection".

With the 1st order analysis complete, I then began to distill groups of descriptive codes into 2nd order themes to begin illuminating the larger narrative (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). For example, codes describing emotional exhaustion or general anxiety could be categorized as "Negative wellbeing outcomes", while codes describing connectivity demands and work-life blur were grouped as "Boundary management demands".

In tandem with data gathering and these beginning phases of analysis, I became more familiar with relevant concepts, frameworks, and theories to identify whether my findings support existing literature or reveal a new concept entirely (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). I then came across Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) work, "Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work". Considering interviewees had crafted their surroundings through different means, Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job crafting

framework seemed most suitable to consider as I continued my analysis and identified aggregate dimensions.

These dimensions, similar to the motivations for job crafting proposed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), are a *need for control over work and life*, a *need for personal purpose*, and finally a *need for social connection*. The first dimension, a need for control over work and life, resulted from 5 relevant themes of boundary control, boundary management demands, more free time available, negative motivational outcomes, and recovery activities. The second dimension, a need for personal purpose, arose from the themes of discovering personal purpose and negative wellbeing outcomes. The third and final dimension, the need for social connection, resulted from the theme of connecting with others. The resulting data structure from the stages of 1st order descriptive codes, 2nd order themes and aggregate dimensions can be seen below (fig. 4).

3.4. Reliability of the study

As this is a qualitative study, there are difficulties in relation to the reliability. Reliability relates to the credibility of the conclusions that are made as well as the interpretations of my thesis. A reliable study also considers whether my research can be tested by repeating the same process and achieving the same results. However, given the qualitative nature of my thesis as well as the circumstances, timeline and people interviewed, repeating this study would not be feasible. Therefore, I rely on the transparency in outlining the methodological approach and analysis and the detailed description of my findings to instill reliability, providing readers with the possibility to become well-acquainted with my topic area, findings, and execution. As such, the following point should be considered.

Many of the interviewees that I spoke that in my research were either close friends of mine or acquaintances through friends in my social circle. While this may bias some of the responses I received, I made this decision because it was more likely for interviewees to trust me with personal information about their experiences throughout the pandemic. As well,

prior to every interview, I asked interviewees to act as if they were speaking to me for the first time to ensure they would not disclose information in a way that is not understandable to friends outside my circle.

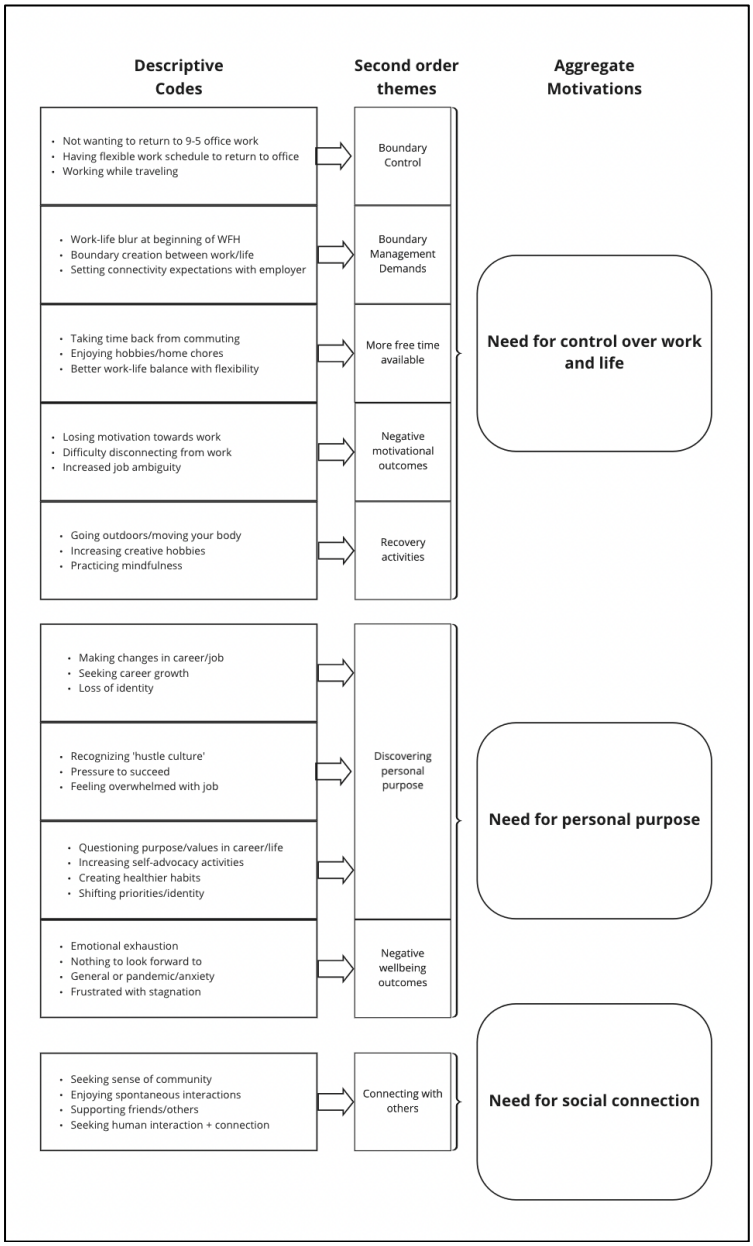


Figure 4: Final Coding Analysis

4. Results

Interviewees spoke at length about the transition from in-office work to a work-from-home setting. This included the troubles they had in adjusting to an environment with increased connectivity and as a result, the blur in work-life balance that occurred. Although some activities such as exercising and going outdoors were important in helping interviewees disconnect from work, there was a clear negative effect stemming from a lack of human interaction, which was even present in those living with a partner or with family. To adapt to this type of environment, interviewees often adapted by setting up and building habits to craft their job and life, ultimately changing how their career and personal lives blended. These crafting activities were motivated by three core motivations, a *need for control over work and life*, a *need for personal purpose*, and finally a *need for social connection*.

4.1. Motivations

4.1.1. Need for control over work and life

As interviewees spoke about the shift to remote work during the pandemic, the advantages and disadvantages they experienced in a work-from-home environment became clear. Certain positive aspects were an increase in time in the mornings to spend on personal activities or the flexibility to shift their work schedule. As these options became available to interviewees, having this type of control became incredibly important to them. However, though there were positive elements, some interviewees felt overwhelmed by the constant connectivity to work, causing them to hit a breaking point where they eventually seized control of their job by setting up clear boundaries and prioritizing more activities outside of work.

Patrick, a commercial credit analyst living with his fiancée in Toronto, spoke about the pandemic and working from home allowing him to focus more on important aspects of his

personal life despite other hobbies in his life being inaccessible. As a result, the environment of the pandemic was seen as a positive experience for him overall.

> So, when the pandemic came around, it shifted from the gym to even more of my personal life. So, it was always my relationship number one. And then number two for throughout the pandemic was like, OK, I need to work on my personal life. So that was getting engaged, that was saving to buy a condo, that was preparing for our wedding.

Delilah, a data insights leader living with her partner in Toronto, had always been extremely passionate about her job and enjoyed the fulfillment it brought her. However, while working from home, the responsibilities of her job became so stressful that she experienced burnout. Reaching this breaking point led Delilah to realize more time needed to be spent on personal activities.

> And when I realized that I was so stressed about work that it was impeding my ability to be creative, that literally made my mental health go down even more because I was like it was just like a negative cycle. I was like, well, I'm not doing anything that I enjoy. And I feel more like shit and my anxiety is getting worse. So, it got to a point where I was like, I need to prioritize things in my life.

For both Patrick and Delilah, the motivation towards crafting was clear in that they wanted to gain control over either work or life. Patrick underwent a period of tremendous personal growth with an engagement and buying a property, while Delilah realized she needed control over her work habits.

4.1.2. Need for personal purpose

As the pandemic undoubtedly caused an increase in isolation with the restrictions on social contacts, for many interviewees, much of their time alone or with limited contacts was spent questioning whether their jobs or personal lives were helping them feel validated, positive, and fulfilled. Interviewees often mentioned periods of self-reflection commonly resulting in a self-discovery. This personal growth manifested itself through self-advocacy activities or even career changes.

Maria, a creative director living with her family in Dryden, spent much of her career working for large creative agencies in Toronto. She spoke of the clarity that changing jobs and leaving the culture of creative agencies gave her in having more control over the work she feels fulfilled doing.

> The biggest shift, more than anything from a positive perspective, was that removing myself from that situation allowed for space and clarity and for me to really come back to me, you know, like what are my true needs as being what fuels me, fuels my soul, makes me feel whole, because a lot of those things were so superficial. And so now having had the space and clarity, I feel so much closer to understanding who I am and how I move in this world than I ever have before.

Jim, a business operations manager in New York City, left his career as a classical singer at the beginning of the pandemic to pursue more stability. While discussing the motivations for switching careers, Jim spoke at length about the external validation that he sought in his previous career and how his current role made him feel much more fulfilled.

> And I think initially there was some mourning there or some frustration, but then I realized that if everything I worked for wasn't going to happen, then I didn't need that validation, I didn't need my traditional support structure that wasn't supporting me, it

> was supporting the idea of what I wanted to be. I guess it was-- you probably know, when you go to school for singing for like 10 years, you feel really invested in something and you get your validation from how good you are at auditioning or doing something random like that. But I had to let that go and could focus on my job, my non-singing job. And then I was able to kind of reinvent myself in a way like I had new motivations for doing things compared to the old stuff.

Robert, a customer service representative living alone in Ottawa, shared his experiences with a vocal injury that hindered his ability to pursue choral singing and conducting as a passion outside of his day job. The difficulties he had, particularly in isolation, pushed him to develop unhealthy coping mechanisms, but over time, he realized it was time to advocate for himself and emerge from the pandemic as the person he had always wanted to be.

> And yeah, just over time I've worked on myself to kind of get over the mental hurdle that comes with now with that comes with an injury, because people don't really talk about how injuries, be it in the sport, be it, you know, voice, be it in whatever main thing that you do with your life, if you stop being able to do that thing, there are severe mental repercussions that come with that. And it's just not talked about. And part of getting back into it, if it's something that you genuinely want to do for the rest of your life, is fighting for those hurdles, fighting to get back what you lost. That's the hero's journey. The hero's journey isn't getting to the top. It's getting to the top, losing it, and getting back there.

William, a federal policy analyst in Ottawa, found that while he was adjusting to working from home and coping with increased isolation, he began to explore his purpose in his career, driving him to ask more questions about what made him feel fulfilled and how his career path might be adjusted to better answer that need:

> So it's shifted my perspective in that now I have like I have a better sense of what questions I'm asking, I don't have a better sense of the answers, unfortunately, which is truly the annoying part. But I have a better sense of like the questions that I want to ask.

As a business owner and artist living in Toronto, Lise went through a significant period of self-discovery relating to where she found validation. As opposed to finding self-worth in keeping her schedule constantly booked and keeping busy, her outlook shifted to focus more on how she was taking care of herself, finding more purpose in self-advocacy:

> I think that I realized that I just don't want to be abused anymore. I think that I really realized that I'm done putting up with things that I've seen in my industry for so long and I'm done kind of identifying busy with successful. I think we often do that because if you're not busy or stressed, you're not actually working hard, and I've always been a working horse, like I've always worked hard and I kind of patted myself on the back for that at times being like, OK, you're almost on the verge of a mental breakdown! You must be, like, really going for it, you know? And now I kind of go, wait a second, like, if I take care of myself, I get the same kudos for that. So I really had time to step back and look at the abuse that I had put on myself and also been kind of exposed to through my line of work, and I took a step back and realized, like, I can really choose who I work for and also, you know, I realize that I can take control of my monetary success, you know, things that buy me the things that I need and I can also - or success like just putting a roof over your head - I can take care of those things without subjecting myself to awful working conditions.

The desire for purpose is a strong motivator to craft one's job environment or personal habits outside of work. This need was present across many interviewees and often became a priority as individuals were forced to face either how they find personal validation or what their career outlook is entirely.

4.1.3. Need for social connection

Though it may seem evident that the isolation forced on individuals around the world led to a lack in human interaction, the impact of this isolation is far greater. With the collapse of their social contacts, interviewees realized how important and valuable human connection is for their own wellbeing. This need for social connection resulted in shifts in social contacts at work or in one's personal life or even changed perceptions of the meaningfulness of interactions overall.

Elisabeth, a community manager in Vancouver, lost much of her support group before the pandemic began, while also moving into an apartment by herself. When prompted about what made her feel recovered outside of her work, Elisabeth highlighted her social circle as her core way in finding support and feeling valued.

> Recovery for me comes that's when I'm around people who I think that value me. And who love me and who care about me and who want to support me and see. Me, for the best of me, yeah. I really struggle when I don't have that in my life, because I don't always see that about myself and I haven't always like I've always really, really struggled with seeing the positives and the good parts about myself. And that's been really hard, and so I think that recovery for me comes best when I'm around people who see those good parts and not necessarily sitting there being like Grace, you are incredible, you're wonderful, you're great, you're amazing, you're like all of those things. [It's] sitting there and really knowing that these people want what's best for me and my life. And they see me for who I am and they still love me. And that means I'm lovable and that I'm worth something.

When the world was put on halt and the number of interactions in their day-to-day lives shrank, it became very clear just how much the small interactions mattered, meaning interviewees became more appreciative of those moments. Michelle, a content creator in Hamilton living with her partner, spoke at length about how precious those shorter

interactions were throughout her day. Ultimately, the lack thereof compelled her to appreciate them more when they happened.

> I think you really realize as an extrovert that you get certain things out of those random conversations you have throughout the day with people who might be your friends. They might be your acquaintances. They might be someone that's a stranger that you've just had a nice pass by or a nice, you know, elevator conversation with or something like that. And like I notice it so much more now because and again, like obviously, like, I love my partner, but like, I feel like you can only kind of-- there's only a certain amount that you can pull out of getting from one person rather than getting from different energies of people. So, like, I really appreciate those little in between moments.

Whereas Elisabeth had a profound realization of the importance of her social circle, Michelle's focus was much more on the in-between moments throughout her day. In both conversations, however, the need for those human interactions as being purposeful and valuable to them was fundamental.

4.2. Job crafting activities

In the face of a major shift in job environment considering many employers decided to operate fully remotely, many interviewees took it upon themselves to craft their job in a variety of ways. These crafting activities are changing job task boundaries such as taking more job tasks to work towards a promotion, changing cognitive job task boundaries by altering one's view of work as discrete parts of a whole and changing relational boundaries at work by, for example, setting boundaries on work contacts to prioritize wellbeing and mental health.

4.2.1. Changing job task boundaries

4.2.1.1. *Alter the number of job tasks*

Whether for the purpose of taking on more job tasks to seek recognition or actively reducing the number of tasks to increase work-life balance, altering the number of job tasks is an important tool for changing job task boundaries.

Trish, a federal research analyst living with her partner and parents in Ottawa, capitalized on her increased productivity during the pandemic to surpass her colleagues and work towards a promotion. For Trish, visibility in her job was a top priority.

> So right now, especially recently, I am considered the workhorse of my team, despite being the junior employee, mostly because my senior director doesn't trust my two other colleagues to actually get their work done. Even if I'm the junior employee, she's always relying on me to do it because she knows I'm not just online, I'm online working. So I'm getting a lot of the responsibility of doing the higher-level jobs like I'm doing like the senior adviser job of our team right now, and luckily, like when I just did my performance review, like I'm getting support, which will put me into talent management, which will help me get at least some acting, but hopefully a promotion to get a better job so that I can actually be compensated for all the hard work that I've been doing this past year.

David, a business analyst living with his partner in Ottawa, was encouraged throughout the pandemic with the opportunity to take on more job tasks because it was an opportunity for him to learn and grow as an employee and excel his career as an analyst.

> The reason why I like having a lot of the projects is I can start talking to a lot of other people at the bank. So, in terms of my personal growth with the bank being able to talk to more people and knowing more things and developing more skills is the reason why I've been assigned these many projects, because they know I want to learn and I want to grow with them.

While speaking with Renée, an arts managing director living in Montreal, she opened up about the struggles of accepting too much workload and the changes that needed to be made to better advocate for herself and find more optimal work-life balance.

> I've learned I am a yes man. I now catch myself saying yes to things that I know I actually can't commit to or that are in direct conflict with something else I have to do to make people happy. Which never makes them happy because then you can't do it anyway. And yeah, to avoid conflict, which doesn't actually avoid conflict. So yeah, I stopped that.

All three of these interviewees found unique pathways to altering the number of job tasks they took on, however each interviewee's motives and goals were different. For Renée, her discovery of being a 'yes man' led her to reduce job tasks and prioritize wellbeing. For Trish, on the other hand, her behaviour was rooted in seeking advancement and as a result, she increased her number of job tasks.

4.2.1.2. *Alter the type of job tasks*

A similar form of changing job task boundaries is altering the type of job tasks. If individuals are working from home and completing tasks that aren't fulfilling, they may take it upon themselves to work towards a promotion to be given tasks better suited for them. Another example of altering the type of job tasks could be an employee feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of tasks and therefore choosing to find simpler responsibilities that might better facilitate their skillset.

Delilah, a data insights leader living in Toronto with her significant other, said that although there was a lot of ambiguity around a promotion she received, especially given the transition

to remote work at the same time, she still enjoyed that she was able to take on more leadership tasks and more responsibility.

> Like, I was super about it, but there was just a lot of ambiguity around the role in general, like it was a new role. They literally made us write our job descriptions like it was very up in the air. And you kind of figure it out as you go. But like, don't let anything slip or else you're going to get shit, obviously. So, within the last year, I would say that we transitioned more to like a director role where we have direct reports, we're thinking about training. We're thinking more like holistically of the team, like trying to keep things going, less of like I just kind of show up to work, do my shit and leave. But now I'm like I show up, I have to think about like 15 other people unofficially, you know what I mean? And now it's a bit more official. Like, I actually have direct reports and there's a bit more structure to it, but it's a bit still like up in the air.

Denise, a federal policy analyst living in Ottawa, spoke to me about her upcoming transition to a different department. When prompted about the motivations behind switching departments, Denise shared that it was the intensity of the work environment and type of work involved that she was excited about.

> And in March, another opportunity came up with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and I've always wanted to go there, and I'd be working on the blue economy strategy. So it's an initiative that is-- the minister of the department it's a priority for her. So I've been wanting to work on a file that would be really busy and kind of like high pressure on demand all the time. So, yeah, I took the opportunity and yeah, I jumped on it. I've always wanted to work for the Department of Fisheries, so that's why I was really excited to start.

In the case of Denise, the opportunity to change her task type to be high pressure and on demand was motivating. Delilah was focused on crafting her current role in a director-level

position in a way that best suited her abilities while trying to navigate the ambiguity of creating her own role responsibilities.

4.2.1.3. Alter the tools used for job tasks

In the case of remote work, interviewees explained the various tools that they used to complete their job tasks. At times, however, the very nature of their position was one that required close human interaction to maintain productivity. In this case, interviewees found strategies to alter the tools that are used for their job tasks to better facilitate the environment they require.

Allison, a PhD candidate and teaching assistant in Toronto, mentioned that her work often involved many interactions with colleagues, which often facilitated the research process. While in-person interactions were not possible given restrictions in Toronto, Allison made changes to her working style at home to better facilitate the group-work that she enjoyed with her colleagues.

> And over time, what I've started doing is I work over Zoom with other Ph.D. students sometimes. So, we'll set up a meeting and just do like Pomodoro Method, kind of like blocks of time together, and then we'll chitchat in between. I find myself sending a lot of, like, voice notes to people now because I live by myself and sometimes, I don't talk to anyone all day. So instead of texting, I'll often send voice messages to people. It's just a nice way to feel connected, but it's very isolating and with a Ph.D., my deadlines with my chapters are so few and far between that.

Another example of altering tools for job tasks comes from a conversation with Victor, a design lead living in San Francisco. Victor reflected positively on the implementation of remote collaborative software and its capabilities, which allowed him and his team to

collaborate with clients abroad without the need for travel. This was something he intended to continue even once the pandemic ended.

> And so now that we've used those tools and we've been using those tools, I see there's a tremendous benefit, the ability for us to then be able to contribute to a shared space asynchronously across time zones, whereas previously, you know, you had to be in the same physical space with, like physical post-its, put them up on physical boards. What this allows us to do in a way, is like, you know, you can have a team based in Chicago come into a brainstorm, which previously wasn't really easy or possible. Or you could have a guide come and review the work, you know, when they have time and then leave feedback asynchronously for you to review. […] And I feel like even once we go back to the office, I think there are things that we want to keep from those kinds of design principles that we learned, like how do we help like more collaboration across geographies, across locations, all that stuff.

While there were conflicting views on how much technology facilitated collaboration, both interviewees altered the tools they used to better perform their work. Allison focused on group Zoom calls to replicate the environment of shared learning she was so accustomed to. Victor was overwhelmingly positive about the new tools he had access to for collaboration, demonstrating he was likely to continue using those options in the future when necessary.

4.2.1.4. *Alter the contextual and schedule boundaries*

A final strategy to change job tasks boundaries – one that came up frequently when speaking about the flexibility of remote work – was the capability to alter the contextual and schedule boundaries of work. When interviewees were asked about the options for returning to the office, they mentioned that the ability to work from home was now something they valued, whether it be working just a few days a week remotely or traveling outside of their city while working. The flexibility of remote work also offered interviewees the unique opportunities

to craft their schedules in a way that best fit their working style or allowed them to complete other tasks.

Matthew, an interaction designer living in San Francisco, was initially uncertain about a shift to remote work. However, he soon learned to enjoy the flexibility it provided in choosing his work hours and allowing him to enjoy his hobbies such as biking. Most importantly, though, was his enthusiasm about working remotely while traveling to different locations.

> And I think what I might do after this is kind of go somewhere for a month and work from there for two weeks and then take two weeks off as opposed to just doing like a two-week vacation and coming back. There's a lot of places where I'd do that. I would totally go to Hawaii for a month and just work from there, which I can do now because it's not going to be a big ass negotiation because the groundwork was done where it was like it works and I was productive when I did it the last time. So there's no reason to not go now.

Maria, a creative director who moved from Toronto to Dryden and left her role in a creative agency in Toronto, mentioned that in changing employers, she took it upon herself to make deliberate changes to her work schedule to be more productive.

> Something that I implemented probably about six months ago was I created like a structured schedule for myself. So, I said like, OK, from this hour to this hour, you have me for meetings, for calls, like whatever. You have me as far as that connection goes. From this hour, which is usually about 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon onward imagine that I'm not available to you, not that I'm not working, but it's when I'm plugged in, doing my own work, not being distracted by whatever. Part of the reason that I wanted to get out of agency life was because I was in a role where I was managing people so I would have a lot of visits.

The adoption of remote work as a suitable and feasible option for employees and organizations brings many new options and where and when employees can work. Maria had the ability to build time in her schedule to prioritize her own work, something that was not an option in her previous position. Matthew intended on travelling much more after the pandemic, taking advantage of the fact that he could be equally as productive no matter his physical location.

4.2.2. Changing cognitive job task boundaries

4.2.2.1. *Alter view of work as discrete parts of whole*

Because of the passion that interviewees had for their work, this also meant that when activities were severely restricted throughout the pandemic, interviewees found themselves increasing their workload to a point of burnout. This burnout, however, was a wakeup call for many interviewees in that it forced them to reflect on how their job fit into their personal life and whether their job gave them the fulfillment they needed. These reflections led to changes in cognitive job task boundaries by altering the view of work as discrete parts of a whole.

Delilah, a data insights leader in Toronto, found her mental health severely deteriorating during the pandemic as she increasingly sought validation through her job while limiting her creative hobbies. Upon reaching a breaking point, Delilah had a significant mindset change that she believes will continue after the pandemic.

> So, I feel like when we go back afterward, I feel like my whole mindset has changed honestly around separation from the job a little bit more and just knowing that I just come to work, I do the best that I can. I try my best, like, you know what I mean? Like, I have good relationships with people like I do. I'm doing what I can. That's the kind of thing that I'm trying to, like, reinforce a little bit more instead of putting so

> much goddamn pressure on myself every day, like it's just not healthy. So that's definitely changed.

Helen, a classical singer living in San Francisco, shared her experiences of feeling directionless throughout the pandemic as opportunities to sing were few and far between. However, in a time of struggle and through a period of self-discovery, Helen found a renewed sense of purpose in her career as a performer.

> It's a renewed sense of why I do what I do. That it's not for me, it's for the community, it's for the society, and it's like a much, much larger picture than standing up and singing. Yeah, I think that it's so beyond any one individual and we can't explain why we're drawn to music, but it's so important. Yeah, and to be someone that can provide something that someone might need to hear at any given time is something that I think is crucial. Um, yeah, so being a communicator and communicator of healing, I think that, uh, to be able to communicate joy, sadness, grief, um, and, uh, and say through music and poetry that, um, that the experiences that someone might be going through are valid? That, to me, is important.

Through an exceedingly difficult time during the pandemic, Helen experienced a transformation and developed a newfound sense of purpose in her work as a performer, ultimately seeing the contributions she was making to communities. Conversely, Delilah realized her job was only one part of her life and therefore strived to find more balance in her priorities.

4.2.3. Changing relational boundaries

4.2.3.1. Alter with whom one interacts at work

Interviewees changed the relational boundaries of their work by altering with whom one interacts at work. This strategy was used for reasons ranging from a lack of human interaction to a desire to interact and learn more from colleagues.

Joyce, a businessowner who had begun the pandemic as a marketing manager for a start-up in Ottawa, shared about the isolation that she felt working for a company remotely and how it led her to actively create a 'buddy system' to make sure she was interacting with at least one colleague from work.

> However, it was a little bit more difficult psychologically in terms of I knew that most of my colleagues were in the city. So, it was really hard for me to not be like, oh, hey, let's meet up, but I found one of them. We ended up grabbing lunch or coffee a few times. So, I made like a buddy system with somebody that lived in my region, and I didn't feel so isolated.

David, a business analyst living in Ottawa, mentioned that he increased his workload at the bank he works at to increase the number of interactions he had with employees and capitalize on learning opportunities as a result.

> So the reason why I like having a lot of the projects is I can start talking to a lot of other people at the bank. So in terms of my personal growth with the bank being able to talk to more people and knowing more things and developing more skills is the reason why I've been assigned these many projects, because they know I want to learn and I want to grow with them. So overall, it's been more like really great, essentially just having a lot on my plate.

David took initiative in networking as much as possible because he saw that as an opportunity to learn and grow in his role as an analyst. On a related note, Joyce saw the power of social

connection at work in a time of crisis and found a proactive strategy of a buddy system beneficial to her own wellbeing.

4.2.3.2. Alter nature of interactions at work

In the face of an overwhelming work environment, interviewees shared the boundaries that were required to limit the types of interactions that were taking place. Altering the nature of interactions at work allowed interviewees to keep interactions for those most important.

Elisabeth, a community manager for a religious organization in Vancouver, spoke about the near-constant communication she received from students across several different campuses. This burden of feeling available all the time pushed her to set up boundaries with students about what they should and should not contact her for.

> So, you know, it took a really long time retraining of myself, but also retraining of the students to be like, hey, just because I work all the time does not mean that you can call me after 9:00 p.m. To be like 'Grace, I think I found anti-Semitism in my reading'. Like, I don't want to read an academic paper at 10 p.m. at night with you. I'm really sorry. That's not what I want to be doing. I want to sit in my bed and watch Netflix.

Managing work and life balance means understanding what types of interactions are most necessary in a role. Elisabeth created boundaries with the students she interacts with by establishing what was appropriate to contact her for and what may be considered intrusive. The benefit of crafting boundaries was a more manageable work-life balance.

4.2.3.3. Alter form of interactions at work

As interviewees adapted to remote work, they also learned when in-person interactions were needed versus when certain meetings or discussions could be held online or virtually. This was seen as altering the form of interactions at work and was done either during the pandemic itself or was said to be important for return to office flexibility.

Neil, an artistic director and choreographer living in Montreal, shared that he believed many in-person interactions were now not need with the adoption of video calling software like Zoom. The benefit for him was being able to save enormous amounts of time.

> I will never go to another in-person meeting again. I will never, unless I'm in the building already as part of my day, I will not schlep to some place to have a meeting. We do not need them. Yeah, this has shown me anything can happen on Zoom. I would not come to meet you for coffee to have this conversation, but I know we can do it online. That's fine. I don't need to travel. It's all good.

Michelle, a content creator in Hamilton, was very adamant on a flexible return-to-office option for her work, emphasizing that although the in-person moments would be needed for her to enjoy her work, they wouldn't be needed every day.

> Yeah, for sure, and it does feel like a bit of a contradiction because, like, I thoroughly enjoy those in-person moments, do I think it needs to be five days a week? Probably not. I think that. I'm going to appreciate going into the office, seeing those people so much more, if it is on a week like once-a-week kind of thing, like it's not going to it's not you're not going to have that, like commuting burnout. You're not going to have that sitting in the office burnout because some days it's like, yeah, you're busy. And I'm working on a bunch of stuff all day. And then some days it's kind of a lighter day and like, I don't need to be at the office.

Michelle understood that a return to regular commuting to the office every workday would likely promote burnout and that some interactions were better suited on video. Neil was even more adamant on the value of video calls, noting that commuting was a significant burden in his daily activities. For him, there was no return to in-person meetings if it could be avoided.

Whether altering the relational, cognitive or task boundaries of work, interviewees went through profound changes to satisfy their needs as employees. Several new types of crafting strategies became apparent for changing task boundaries, being altering contextual and schedule boundaries and altering the tools for job tasks, while for changing relational boundaries, a new strategy of altering the form of interactions was identified.

4.3. Life crafting activities

While interviewees made profound changes to their work through different job crafting activities, the same core motivations also led to meaningful life crafting in the form of changing personal activity boundaries through strategies such as altering the number of personal activities, changing cognitive personal activity boundaries by altering the view of personal activities as discrete parts of a whole and changing social and relational boundaries outside of work through, for instance, altering the form of interactions outside of work.

4.3.1. Change personal activity boundaries

4.3.1.1. *Alter type of personal activities*

Remote work gave interviewees increased flexibility and while many felt isolated at home, it also gave individuals the opportunity to explore new hobbies and activities outside of work. Particularly in the context of self-advocacy, many began exercising, journaling, reading, or taking care of plants, all examples of altering the types of personal activities within their day.

When prompted about certain activities that he began during the pandemic, William stated that hobbies like reading and exercising are now crucial towards maintaining his wellbeing and dealing with general anxiety.

> I've recently discovered that working out in the mornings I prefer to working out after work. It really gives me that boost for the day. Reading has been a real sort of godsend and just the ability to distract yourself from the daily influx of just like all of the news and all of the pandemic news and all of the awful things that are happening there, that you constantly have access to them and it's your only connection to the outside world. It's like if you spend so much time by yourself and isolated, then your interactions become so mediated by what you see on social media, which is not often great. And so, reading and just taking time to take stock of what you're doing and just realize that your surroundings are sort of being distracted by the whole craziness has definitely helped me recover.

Florence is a Ph.D. candidate living by herself in Montreal who underwent a period of deep reflection and transformation that resulted in advocating for her own wellbeing more in her personal life. While discussing self-advocacy, Florence shared some of the activities she incorporated into her routine.

> And so I think in self-care, one of the big things that I started doing this year was I have an anxiety journal, so I have a journal and it all started with the questions that I asked all my friends about, like how my anxiety impacted them. And just like another big thing was using social media as a tool for learning, right? Like, I made a clear decision to follow psychologists and psychotherapists and learn what I could from them and kind of be a self-healer through reaching out or seeking information. That was a big one, and I have a relationship journal as well to think about codependency and think about certain things that I'm working through. That seemed really important.

William consciously began to include hobbies focused on self-care into his routine such as exercise, journaling, and reading, ultimately contributing positively to his everyday wellbeing. Similarly, Florence found immense value in journaling as a tool for learning more about herself and her own needs. She also sought helpful information about healing and mindfulness in online resources. Building these new habits demonstrates how altering the type of personal activities can have unique benefits.

4.3.1.2. *Alter number of personal activities*

Altering the number of personal activities was equally as common as a strategy to change personal activity boundaries. Flexibility in their schedules and the possibility to work from home allowed them to complete more tasks throughout the day, whereas earlier they may have had to wait until weekends. Individuals may also take advantage of their breaks to disconnect with hobbies such as music or video games.

David, a business analyst, shared how he spends extra time during his day on the house he and his partner just purchased, taking the opportunity to plan how they will decorate when they move in. He also has always enjoyed playing video games but started to include it in his work breaks to mentally disconnecting from his job.

> We go to the house that we purchased. I mentioned where we go and kind of set things up. We bring some stuff in, we make sure everything's good, clean, kind of plan around as to what we want to do. So, it's kind of a new disconnect of, hey, like, you know, you can go and do those activities. Otherwise, another one I've been doing is just playing Minecraft, essentially just to kind of relax, because that's a very common game for lunch where I just for like, I go and eat and then come back for like thirty or twenty-five minutes just to kind of recalibrate or kind of relax a little bit. And then once I just finish whatever task I'm doing there, I can just straight up walk back. I can

> just go right back to work and it's like, you know, just something to kind of deviate a little bit from what I'm doing.

David has a multitude of tasks that he alternates between depending on his emotional state. If working longer hours and he needs micro-breaks to detach from work, he used video games as a mechanism to disconnect. When time permits, he focuses on the move into his newly bought house and all the responsibilities that come with decorating a home.

4.3.2. Change cognitive personal activity boundaries

4.3.2.1. Alter view of personal activities as discrete parts of whole

When interviewees either began including new hobbies into their routine or altered the number of hobbies they had, they acquired a newfound appreciation for the time spent on those hobbies, seeing them as a fundamental part of their identity. Feelings of pride and validation were often mentioned, where mindset was less about having to prove one's worth, and more about enjoying those moments.

When Allison, a PhD candidate in Toronto, was asked about how she might see her lifestyle after the pandemic, she said the pride she felt from prioritizing exercise made her feel confident that she was making healthy decisions on her own about who she wants to be.

> And so, I'm proud of myself, for example, for continuing to prioritize exercise like I feel and in good shape and like. Yeah, I think it could have gone another way, right? I'm not perfect, so maybe I drink a little bit too much. But, you know, it's all in moderation, I guess. But it's definitely interesting to be forced now to make choices about who you are and how you want to spend your time, because it's like you can make those decisions totally for yourself, you know?

Before the pandemic began, Delilah was focused on trying to monetize her side passion as a painter. When her hobbies fell by the wayside during the pandemic, a crucial part in starting to paint again was shifting her mindset to enjoy her painting more for herself and her creative expression rather than feel pressured to make it a successful business.

> Like, especially with making art and trying to make that into, like a business. I feel like that was fueled a lot by this whole go, go, go. Got to make everything bigger and better, you know what I mean? Instead of just, like, enjoying what I was doing. And that I think changed a lot is how I view my creative outlet a bit more and like putting a lot less pressure on myself in that sense and viewing it as more of a mental health benefit and less of a monetary like make money off of everything and try to grow and become this whole big thing, it's just like chill, like just do it because you love it and then everything will kind of fall into place.

To interviewees like Allison, the simple act of exercising became much more significant, almost as a symbol of resilience and dedication to one's health. While Delilah began reducing her expectations of herself at work, she also began to shift her mindset about creative hobbies, seeing them as fundamental part of her identity as opposed to a means of financial gain.

4.3.3. Change social + relational boundaries

4.3.3.1. Alter with whom one interacts outside of work

A significant portion of the self-discovery that interviewees experienced in isolation revolved around the relationships they held in their personal lives, leading them to craft the social and relational boundaries surrounding them. Much like altering with whom one interacts *at* work, this involved altering with whom one interacts *outside of* work. Individuals perhaps realized which relationships didn't give them the validation they need, or they might deeply miss the many types of interactions in their daily lives and therefore actively seek them out.

Terrance, a freelance communications expert in Montreal, enjoyed a career as a professional musician who frequently traveled before the pandemic, however resorted to his current position when most concerts were cancelled. The nature of his career in performance was that he frequently interacted with myriad people at bars, clubs, or other venues. When speaking about his social circle shrinking and how he was left with only those he was closest with, he explained that he took stock of the kinds of friendships in his life.

> I just feel like some examples of positive have been really kind of discovering what I need as far as goals to get work done. That's a big one. Who or what kind of people make me feel rejuvenated after spending time with them and what kind of people make me feel really stressed or low.

Simon, a lawyer living in Ottawa, believed that the pandemic gave him a new perspective on the importance of appreciating the interactions that are beneficial to him and his wellbeing and being cautious of those that don't provide that benefit.

> It's made me not take for granted the social interactions that I needed. And I say that I need it because I think it's important that that's something I did realize that there are certain interactions that you don't need, that don't actually benefit you, that actually are more tiresome than anything. And you kind of realize what's important to you, what you need for your well-being, for your mental health and on both sides what you don't need and like these Zooms with 20 people on a Thursday night might not be what you need until midnight.

Carla, an investment banker living in New York City, reflected on the way the pandemic forced her to go outside of her comfort zone and meet new people in her neighbourhood at her local bar or at the dog park, which resulted in the creation of new and important friendships.

> And so I just started talking to my neighbors more, for example, and now one of those neighbors is my best friend and we lived together when we were in Cali for a month or something or once I got Hilda, then I started bringing her to the same dog park and met like a whole community of people there. And we go on hikes together all the time or like, go grab beers all the time or, you know, meet up at the park a couple of nights a week and like, hang out.

A lack of human interaction had profound impacts on how individuals perceived their social connections. Carla embarked in unfamiliar territory by forcing herself to meet new people, the result being important new friendships. Conversely, both Simon and Terrance became acutely aware of the interactions that did not serve them or make them feel positive.

4.3.3.2. Alter the nature of interactions outside of work

One aspect that stood out in how interviewees changed social and relational boundaries outside of work was their willingness to experience community and be surrounded by those they may not even know. This went beyond altering one's social circle and instead was altering the nature of interactions outside of work. Examples of this are community work, spending time to meet neighbours or going to church.

Nora, a business analyst working remotely in Ontario, felt inspired by the idea of volunteering in the community or fostering animals to interact with more people outside of her own group of friends.

> I would love to explore more volunteer options, and right now I feel like I can't really do that if it's like, well, like volunteering in the community or it's just like not really. I would love to, like, look into volunteering opportunities around, like maybe Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Canada or at shelter somewhere. Like I was fostering dogs, like something to do with maybe something with animals, but like that's definitely

> something that like I think I would enjoy doing to disconnect from work and find meaning somewhere like in a different thing.

While speaking with artistic director and choreographer Neil about what he learned about himself throughout the pandemic and the lockdown, a core discovery was the importance of having meaningful interactions at a time when communication can be without tone over virtual devices.

> It's the regular things that you say as a human interaction that you don't type, that no one types. And so I realized that I wasn't doing that for my husband, I wasn't doing that for my mom, I wasn't doing that for my closest friends. And in turn, I noticed because that wasn't happening for me. And I was like "Wow I'm a baby." And I was like, well, I can't expect something if I don't give it back. So I have to give if I expect to receive something. And so it's making a point of, you know, I work with a colleague who is also one of my best friends and like, she's working her ass off. And I'm going to tell her she's doing a great job. And it was like waterworks just flew. I just sent it in text, we weren't even talking and she was like, you don't know how much I need to hear this like I do because I needed to hear it.

In Nora's case, social connections for the purpose of volunteering and guiding others became a priority, meaning social connection could not simply be in seeing friends or family. Neil, however, explained how he wished to change *how* he interacted with friends and family, putting a greater emphasis on acknowledgment and validation of those he cares about.

4.3.3.3. Alter the form of interactions outside of work

Finally, given the specific restrictions that were put in place limiting social contacts, interviewees became acutely aware of the differences between virtual and in-person interactions, understanding that subtleties of in-person interactions were important for their

wellbeing. Human connection was very often said to be lacking over virtual calls, and the biggest difference between virtual and in-person meetings were the ability to say nothing at all and simply be surrounded by your friends or family.

While speaking about what makes in-person interactions different from calls over Zoom, Samuel, a government clerk in Ottawa, highlighted that in-person interactions allowed much more intimacy, even in moments around friends.

> Embracing for sure, like, being able to give your friends, a hug or, you know, be close to them or even talk to them or not wear masks, I guess like that, like intimacy or touch is a big thing, even like a platonic way. Just being close to people is nice.

When discussing the same topic, Allison from Toronto felt the difference between in-person and virtual interactions was the feeling of online meetings being scheduled, noting that when spending time with one of her close friends in person, it is comforting to be able to spend time together without engaging in much conversation.

> I think when you're hanging out in person, there's something about just kind of like being silent together like we can sit on our phones, or we can just sort of chit chat without there being any aim. With Zoom, it's like it's a scheduled event, almost. You feel like you have to have something to say, have something to contribute and be a little bit on because you're sort of performing like, oh, I'm listening, right? Which we all have to do. But what I love about going to see Thomas is we can just shoot the shit in the kitchen and like, be cooking something together and not even talk much. Like it's very, very comforting for sure. There's a familiarity there that's not there over Zoom, I guess.

The difference between in-person and virtual interactions was felt by nearly every interviewee. Though there were positive aspects to virtual calls such as access to friends

when needed, the absence of human touch, intimacy and familiarity often made those experiences lack the substance they needed in their personal lives. This demonstrated a fundamental understanding of when in-person interactions were needed as opposed to virtual calls.

In the case of life crafting, much of the crafting activities and strategies identified fell into similar groups as job crafting. Interviewees could change the relational, cognitive and task boundaries of their lives by altering for example the number of personal activities or by altering with whom one interacts outside of work.

5. Discussion

5.1. Main Findings

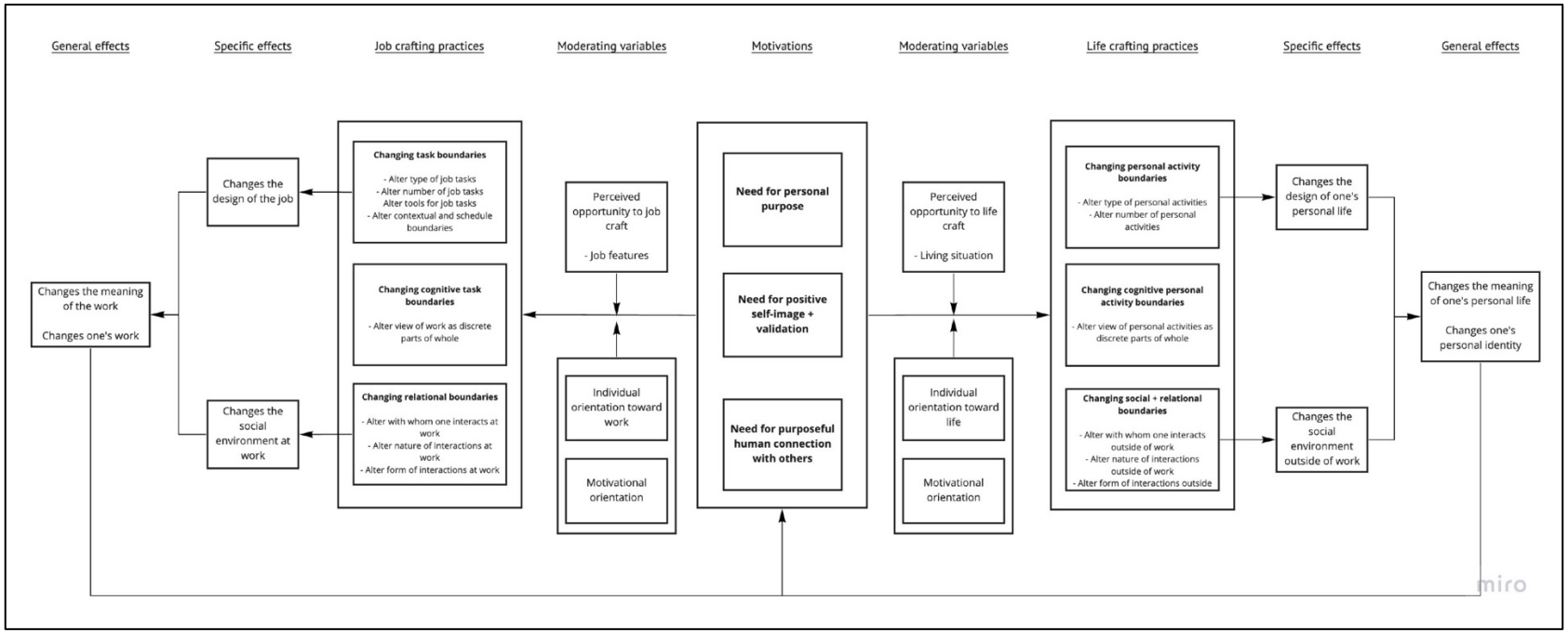
My research into how millennials were coping with increased isolation and connectivity throughout the pandemic revealed not only job crafting practices, but also a mirrored set of life-crafting practices. Within one's job, interviewees could either (1) change job task boundaries, (2) change cognitive task boundaries and (3) change relational boundaries. Each of these crafting practices had a subset of strategies that were used to achieve said practice, from altering the contextual and schedule boundaries of work to altering the form of interactions at work.

Similarly, outside of the context of work, interviewees could (1) change personal activity boundaries, (2) change cognitive personal activity boundaries and (3) change social + relational boundaries. These crafting practices also had a subset of strategies, from altering the type of personal activities to altering with whom one interacts outside of work. Together, these 6 life-job crafting practices were driven by three foundational motivations, which are the *need for control over work and life*, the *need for personal purpose*, and the *need for social connection*. The resulting theoretical framework from these findings can be seen in Figure 5.

As can be seen below, the presence of job or life crafting practices is mediated by several variables. For job crafting, it is the perceived ability to job craft dictated by one's job features. For instance, one interviewee named Joseph was a partner at a mortgage lending company and therefore was responsible for many employees, limiting his ability to job craft. By contrast, interviewee Michelle had started her role remotely in a more entry-level position, giving her more room to job craft.

Other moderating variables are the individual's work and motivational orientation. Patrick, the commercial credit analyst, emphasized that he sees his work simply as a job as opposed to a calling, meaning his motivational orientation was focused on gaining control.

Figure 5: A Work-Life Crafting Model



Conversely, Trish the research analyst was incredibly passionate about her job and therefore her motivational orientation was focused more so on needing personal purpose.

In the context of life crafting, similar moderating variables apply, first being the perceived opportunity to life craft, which largely depended on living situation. The same mortgage lender Joseph also lived with a wife and child with another child on the way. As such, his responsibilities to take care of his children with his wife gave less opportunities to consider life crafting, whereas an interviewee such as Robert who lived alone had much more freedom to craft his life to cater to his personal hobbies. The individual's life and motivational orientations were also important moderating variables in life crafting. Joyce, an extrovert who is highly motivated by her interactions with others, was more likely to find way to purposefully connect with others such as getting to know her neighbors. Nora, on the other hand, appreciated time alone and therefore focused less on interacting with others and instead on being outdoors on hikes since control over her activities was essential to her.

Crafting one's job can have specific effects on both the design of the job and the social environment at work, ultimately changing the meaning of work itself or one's work identity. An ideal example is Maria, who made changes to her work schedule to have meetings during limited hours to enable more productivity in the afternoon. The result was that she felt entirely fulfilled in the work she did and found balance in her work schedule. Life crafting can also bring about change in the design of one's personal life and in the social environment outside of work, changing the meaning of one's personal life and changing one's identity. Delilah had a profound change of mindset in her creative hobbies in that she put much less pressure on herself to make it a successful business outside of her job. This shift in mindset allowed her to enjoy her craft as an artist on a much more personal level.

What is most notable about these findings is that despite many interviewees finding the first few months of remote work and isolation difficult, almost all underwent some form of self-reflection or self-discovery, which culminated in creating habits or shifting their mindset

towards living a more balanced lifestyle and putting less pressure on themselves at work. The level of self-discovery varied of course between interviewees, yet the cadence and patterns between them all related to the core motivations presented in this framework. As the interviewee Robert had mentioned in our conversation on overcoming personal challenges, "The hero's journey isn't getting to the top. It's getting to the top, losing it, and getting back there."

5.2. Theoretical Implications

By extending one of the foundational theories on job crafting by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), my thesis research contributes to multiple areas of research. To begin, scholars researching work-life integration and segmentation have suggested incorporating other areas of organizational research (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). By exploring millennial workers' experiences through the lens of job crafting, my framework bridges work-life integration/segmentation with job crafting by creating a work-life crafting model. As well, my framework suggests that it is employees who actively craft their surroundings, taking a more dynamic and continuous approach than current strategies focused on person-job fit (Kreiner, 2006; Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015).

I also contribute to current literature on job crafting in several ways. First, given the adoption of remote work as a viable option to employees in North America, extending crafting practices to include strategies such as altering schedule and contextual boundaries considers the flexibility offered in working from home (Worley and Gutierrez, 2020); altering the tools for job tasks and altering the form of interactions consider the types of technology that continue to be introduced in organizations (Kossek *et al.*, 2012). Second, considering the separation between work and life is much less likely to occur in most modern job positions due to increased connectivity (Derks *et al.*, 2015; Adisa, Gbadamosi and Osabutey, 2017), anchoring and integrating life crafting practices to Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) Job Crafting model takes into account the important relationship between one's personal life and

work life to achieve work-life balance (Senarathne Tennakoon, 2020). Third, this integrated model also extends current theories on leisure and home crafting and identifies specific crafting strategies outside of the work domain (Petrou and Bakker, 2016; Demerouti *et al.*, 2020). Finally, I have proposed a new motivation for job crafting, the need for personal purpose, in place of the need for a positive self-image at work suggested by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). This new motivation indicates a complex, individual, and profound drive for self-discovery.

The context of this study has implications in adapting to change, particularly the call by Petrou et al. (2012) to research whether major change facilitates job crafting, which was thought by the authors to be unlikely. The circumstances of the pandemic, with employees around the world being thrust into remote work, certainly constitutes change on a massive scale and demonstrates that despite a major environment shift, workers across many occupations took it upon themselves to make changes to their life and job structure to fulfill their needs. Some interviewees were affected more than others, speaking of mental breakdowns or emotional exhaustion, while others were able to adapt at a faster pace; yet all eventually began to craft, indicating these differences were more likely due to individual awareness of job crafting practices.

Lastly, this framework provides more support for the potential of prevention-oriented job crafting (Bindl *et al.*, 2019) with the intention of prioritizing one's mental wellbeing and preventing negative outcomes. Several interviewees reduced the number of tasks they were responsible for or the number of interactions throughout the day, understanding that a higher workload would lead to emotional exhaustion. Overall, this suggests that prevention-oriented crafting could be beneficial to organizations in the long run in avoiding excessive burnout among employees.

5.3. Managerial Relevance

With regards to managerial implications, it is first and foremost important for employers to understand that the ability to craft one's job is only one half of the equation and therefore sufficient room to life craft should be given as well. I encourage leaders in organizations to provide strategies and policies that better facilitate universal (life and job) crafting on an individual level. This could be allowing flexible work hours or allowing employees to work from their preferred location.

As a step further than building strategies, I believe employers should also educate employees on how to craft their jobs and lives. Many interviewees spoke about not having learned these skills in their higher education and therefore would benefit from being guided in what approaches to take. As was seen with interviewees, reducing demands is not a form of withdrawal from work, but rather a coping mechanism to avoid burnout. These are the skills that should be taught within organizations. As an example, educational seminars on life and job crafting could be included as part of corporate wellbeing programs, increasing the impact they have on employees.

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic and employees will very likely be negotiating terms for flexibility as option in their work arrangements, I encourage managers and leaders to welcome these discussions considering it has been shown that remote work had a minimal effect on most companies' revenue streams and workers' job performance. If anything, job performance increased a great deal for many interviewees.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

Considering the unique circumstances surrounding this study, there are issues that future research should address. First, this model was created based on data collected at a time of massive change on a global scale. As such, researchers should test whether this theoretical

framework applies beyond the environment of the pandemic. Furthermore, a longitudinal study approach (e.g. a diary study) would be beneficial to examine the interrelatedness of the multiple variables in this framework over time as well as the longer-term consequences of life-job crafting in greater detail. Also, although the data collected was useful in building this framework, I encourage researchers to replicate this study using several different qualitative data sources such as ethnographic research and field notes.

Second, although this study supported the idea that job crafting exists across many industries by interviewing individuals across various occupations, I acknowledge that there are large differences between certain occupations. Therefore, I suggest researchers investigate these crafting activities within specific industries or occupations.

Thirdly, this model should be quantitively tested as a next step. Researchers can collect data from a wide range of organizations across North America and conduct statistical testing on the model (fig. 7) to help confirm the relationships between motivations, crafting practices and outcomes on life and job design.

Finally, as it was out of the scope of this research, I encourage those to explore the connection between these findings and the future of the ideal worker image in North America. As these findings pointed to a shift from the hustle culture and burnout that is more common in North America (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015) to a more balanced work lifestyle, it would be of interest to understand how the ideal worker image will have changed after the pandemic is over.

I have developed a model that incorporates both life and job crafting practices and anchors them to core motivations, the need for control over job and life meaning, the need for positive self-image and self-validation and the need for purposeful human connections with others. My hope is that this model will provide a basis for future research on job crafting, and that its use will be beneficial to organizations in North America.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Interviewee Table

	Pseudonym	City/Region	Age	Occupation	Male	Female	Family	With S/O	With Roommate/Family	Alone
1	Samuel	Ottawa	26	Government Clerk	1				1	
2	Delilah	Toronto	26	Insights Leader		1			1	
3	Joseph	Barry	33	Mortgage Lender	1			1		
4	Elisabeth	Vancouver	26	Community Manager		1				1
5	Nora	Ottawa	28	Business Analyst		1				1
6	Joyce	Ottawa	26	Business Owner/PR Manager		1			1	
7	Maria	Dryden	30	Creative Director		1				1
8	David	Ottawa	27	Business Analyst	1				1	
9	Michelle	Hamilton/Toronto	28	Content Creator		1			1	
10	Patrick	Toronto	26	Commercial Credit Analyst	1				1	
11	William	Ottawa	26	Policy Analyst	1					1
12	Allison	Toronto	28	PhD Candidate		1				1
13	Terrance	Montreal	25	Composer/Producer	1					1
14	Ashley	Toronto	25	Associate Investment Product Manager		1				1
15	Trish	Ottawa	27	Research Analyst		1			1	
16	Robert	Ottawa	25	Customer Service Representative	1					1
17	Carla	New York City	27	Investment Banking Senior Associate		1				1
18	Jim	New York City	31	Business Operations Manager	1					1
19	Denise	Ottawa	29	Policy analyst		1			1	
20	Lise	Toronto	30	Business Owner		1			1	
21	Helen	San Francisco	27	Artist		1				1
22	Simon	Ottawa	29	Lawyer	1					1
23	Benjamin	Toronto	26	Artist	1					1
24	Emilio	San Marcos	30	Senior Strategist	1					1
25	Laura	Winnipeg	27	Marketing Associate		1			1	
26	Anton	Vancouver	26	Design Lead	1					1
27	Victor	San Francisco	30	Design Lead	1				1	
28	Matthew	San Francisco	29	Interaction Designer	1					1
29	Veronique	Ottawa	26	PhD Candidate		1				1
30	Florence	Montreal	28	PhD Candidate		1				1
31	Anthony	Montreal	26	Actuarial Analyst	1			1		
32	Mark	Ottawa	27	Computational Researcher	1					1
33	Carl	Ottawa	27	Accelerator Systems Engineer	1					1
34	Renee	Montreal	31	Arts Managing Director		1				1
35	Arlene	Ottawa	25	Revenue Operations Manager		1				1
36	Maya	Ottawa	25	Elementary School Teacher		1				1
37	Caroline	Calgary	33	Teacher & Artist		1		1		
38	Neil	Montreal	38	Artistic Director & Choreographer	1				1	
39	Monica	Ottawa	26	Wedding Photographer		1			1	
40	Hugh	Ottawa	28	Electrical Engineer	1				1	

7.2. Discussion Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

Introduction:

1. How have you been this week?
2. And what city do you live in?
3. What is your living situation currently?
4. Could you briefly state your job position and what your day-to-day responsibilities are like at work?

Remote Work:

1. How long have you been working from home?
2. What is your workspace setup currently like at home?

3. What was your initial reaction to working remotely?
4. How have you experienced remote working during this time? What are the positive and negative aspects of remote work?

Recovery:

1. How has the pandemic affected your ability to recover on a daily basis?
2. What types of activities do you feel help you recover throughout the day, after work or on the weekend?
3. How do you feel when taking part in these activities?

Connectivity and work/life balance:

1. What kind of connectivity demands are currently expected by your work?
2. How often would you say you're connected or working after-hours?
3. (if working after hours, maybe describe work/life balance) How has this affected your work/life balance?

Isolation from Pandemic:

Given that the pandemic brought increased isolation and some restrictions depending on your geographic location, how would you say the past year has:

1. Affected your overall wellbeing?
2. Affected your social life?
3. Affected your daily routine?

Self-discovery:

1. Have you used more time during this past year for things like self-discovery or reflection on your thoughts? How so?
2. Have you noticed any difference going from normal life to sort of "getting out of the rat race"?
3. Have you learned something new about yourself this past year?

4. When restrictions are lifted, do you hope to keep some habits as a part of your life? If so, what?

Closing questions:

Earlier, I asked you what your initial reaction to switching to remote work was:

1. Has that changed now? If so, how?
2. How would you improve the overall remote work experience for yourself and others?
3. Is there anything I haven't asked about this topic that you would like to discuss or that you feel is important for you or your wellbeing?